

**Remarks by Ambassador Harry K. Thomas, Jr.**  
**2010 Corporate Social Responsibility Expo**  
**As prepared for delivery**

Secretary Corazon Soliman, League of Corporate Foundations Chairperson  
Edgardo Amistad, LCF President Cecile Alcantara, members of the League,  
distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, a pleasant morning to all of you.

Let me first wish all of you a very happy National Corporate Social Responsibility Week, and tell you how pleased I am that the Philippines celebrates CSR week. That tells me that there is broad engagement in corporate social responsibility programs across all business sectors, across government partners, and from the many beneficiaries of these programs. It tells me that you are making a positive difference. And I am especially heartened that you are commemorating CSR Week by coming together to exchange ideas, synergize your efforts, and broaden your outreach. That's a lot to celebrate. Congratulations to all of you.

We couldn't be here today talking about corporate social responsibility without a very important component – the businesses and corporations who have chosen to operate in the Philippines and contribute to the well-being of people here. We are all inspired by the new initiative and energy of the Aquino administration. We are encouraged that investment and business issues are high on the agenda. The U.S. Embassy remains an advocate for fair business practices, and stands ready to support the government's efforts to improve governance, enhance revenue collections, and initiate reforms. We work closely with the American Chamber of Commerce, and with many of you, on issues important to business.

But today we're celebrating another kind of partnership. Together we are talking about reaching out to Filipinos, about giving back to communities, about moving forward to a better tomorrow. I am proud that the U.S. government has worked hand in hand with many of you here on projects that fulfill all those goals and more. Together we have built classrooms, taught students, offered vocational training, opened health facilities, constructed bridges, launched micro-finance enterprises, installed sanitation systems, and trained the leaders of tomorrow. For every \$1 the U.S. government has contributed, other partners including many of you, have added \$4. It adds up to millions of dollars of investment in the future. It adds up to a lot to celebrate.

Let me share a little secret with you. I have been so excited by the idea of this conference that I've been checking its Facebook page for some weeks now. It's been a great way to measure the enthusiasm behind this event, and to explore the terrific ideas that will be discussed here. Plus, every week the organizers have posted a provocative question, and collected comments from readers. And that's been my favorite part.

A few weeks ago they asked, "What is the most pressing environmental issue that must be addressed ASAP?" Their respondents wrote mostly about typhoon preparedness. It made me remember the incredible partnerships and alliances a year ago that brought us all together to respond to Typhoon Ondoy and the other storms. Working together, we took care of our workers, their communities, their schools, and displaced families. When this conference talks about synergizing programs, that response is one very clear, very successful, example of government, business, civil society and international donors coming together in a rapid, effective manner.

Three weeks ago the organizers asked, “How do you practice being socially responsible in your own homes?” Some people responded by talking about energy conservation. It reminded me of our ongoing partnership with Sunpower that brings solar energy to villages and classrooms in remote areas of Mindanao. People also discussed saving water, and I thought of our partnership with Rotary that will bring clean water to families in five different communities. People talked about waste management, and I thought of Peace Corps volunteers we have working in small communities on recycling projects, partnering with small business. Each of these projects, and many others, brings opportunity and sustainable progress to individual homes.

Just two weeks ago the organizers asked their Facebook friends, “What does it mean to walk the talk?” Yes, it means that you do what you say you will. So let me encourage all of us in the coming days to do more than talk, to brainstorm, to share – let’s do some real planning. Let’s get behind the new government with its ambitious list of reforms and programs, and see where we can help. It can be large, it can be small – but if we do it together we can be powerful. We can be transformative. We can be the heroes of tomorrow who saw the goals, not the obstacles, and made those goals reality.

So this past Monday I checked the Facebook page again, and the question was the most important of all. It read, “Is the Philippines ready for change?” There were several responses, but let me quote the one that impressed me most. It was written by Althea Karla Kalaw, and perhaps she is here. But she wrote, “Change is needed now, more than ever. I really hope we’re ready . . .”

Althea, I think this conference shows that the business community and its corporate social responsibility foundations are ready. I assure you that U.S. government

is ready to do its part. But we now need to walk the talk, and make it happen. I have confidence that, working together, it will.

*Maraming salamat at mabuhay!*